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THE NATURE, DESIGN, AND GENERAL RULES, OF THE United Societies, IN *London*, *Briſtol*, *Kingſwood*, and *Newcaſtle upon Tyne*.

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M. DCC. XLIII.

RULES, &c.

1. IN the latter End of the Year 1739, eight or ten Perſons came to me in *London*, who appeared to be deeply convinced of Sin, and earneſtly groaning for Redemption. They deſired (as did two or three more the next Day) that I would ſpend ſome Time with them in Prayer, and adviſe them how to flee from the Wrath to come; which they ſaw continually hanging over their Heads. That we might have more Time for this great Work, I appointed a Day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every Week, namely on *Thurſday*, in the Evening. To theſe, and as many more as deſired to join with them, (for their Number increaſed daily) I gave thoſe Advices from Time to Time which I judg'd moſt needful for them; and we always concluded

our Meeting with Prayer ſuited to their ſeveral Neceſſities.

2. This was the Riſe of the UNITED SOCIETY, firſt in *London*, and then in other Places. Such a Society is no other than "*a Company of Men* having the Form and ſeeking the Power *of Godlineſs, united in order to pray together, to receive the Word of Exhortation, and to watch over one another in Love, that they may help each other to work out their Salvation.*"

3. That it may the more eaſily be diſcern'd, whether they are indeed working out their own Salvation, each Society is divided into ſmaller Companies, called Claſſes, according to their reſpective Places of Abode. There are about twelve Perſons in every Claſs; one of whom is ſtiled *The Leader*. It is his Buſineſs

I. To ſee each Perſon in his Claſs, once a Week at the leaſt; in order

To enquire how their Souls proſper;

To adviſe, reprove, comfort or exhort, as Occaſion may require;

To receive what they are willing to give, toward the Relief of the Poor.

II. To

II. To meet the Miniſter and the Stewards of the Society once a Week; in order

To inform the Miniſter of any that are Sick, or of any that walk diſorderly, and will not be reproved;

To pay to the Stewards what they have receiv'd of their ſeveral Claſſes in the Week preceding; And

To ſhew their Account of what each Perſon has contributed.

4. There is one only Condition previouſly required, in thoſe who deſire Admiſſion into theſe Societies, *a Deſire to flee from the Wrath to come, to be ſaved from their Sins:* But, wherever this is really fix'd in the Soul, it will be ſhewn by its Fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they ſhould continue to evidence their Deſire of Salvation;

Firſt, By doing no Harm, by avoiding Evil in every kind; eſpecially, that which is moſt generally practis'd. Such is

The taking the Name of GOD in vain;

The profaning the Day of the LORD, either by doing ordinary Work thereon, or by buying or ſelling:

Drunkenneſs, *Buying or ſelling Spirituous Liquors*; or *drinking them* (unleſs in Caſes of extreme Neceſſity:)

Fighting, Quarrelling, Brawling; *Going to Law*, Returning Evil for Evil, or Railing, for Railing: The *uſing many Words* in buying or ſelling:

The *buying or ſelling uncuſtom'd Goods:*

The *giving or taking Things on Uſury:*

Uncharitable or *unprofitable* Converſation:

Doing to others as we would not they ſhould do unto us:

Doing what we know is not for the Glory of GOD: As

The *putting on Gold or coſtly Apparel.*

The *taking ſuch Diverſions* as cannot be uſed in the Name of the LORD JESUS:

The *Singing* thoſe *Songs*, or *reading* thoſe *Books*, which do not tend to the Knowledge or Love of GOD:

Softneſs, and needleſs Self-indulgence:

Laying up Treaſures upon Earth.

5. It is expected of all who continue in theſe Societies, that they ſhould continue to evidence their Deſire of Salvation;

Secondly, By doing Good, by being in every kind, merciful after their Power; as they have Opportunity, doing Good of every poſſible Sort, and as far as is poſſible, to all Men:

To their Bodies, of the Ability which GOD giveth, by giving Food to the Hungry, by cloathing the Naked, by viſiting or helping them that are Sick, or in Priſon.

To their Souls, by inſtructing, *reproving* or exhorting all we have any Intercourſe with: Trampling under Foot that Enthuſiaſtick Doctrine of Devils, that "we are not to do Good, unleſs *our Heart be free to it*."

By doing Good eſpecially to them that are of the Houſhold of Faith, or groaning ſo to be: Employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in Buſineſs; and ſo much the more, becauſe the World will love its own, and them only.

By all poſſible *Diligence and Frugality*, that the Goſpel be not blamed:

By running with Patience the Race that is ſet before them; *denying themſelves, and taking up their Croſs daily*; ſubmitting to bear the Reproach of CHRIST,

CHRIST, to be as the Filth and Off-ſcouring of the World; and looking that Men ſhould *ſay all manner of Evil of them falſely, for their* LORD's *ſake.*

6. It is expected of all who deſire to continue in theſe Societies, that they ſhould continue to evidence their Deſire of Salvation;

Thirdly, By attending upon all the Ordinances of GOD: Such are

The publick Worſhip of GOD;

The Miniſtry of the Word, either read or expounded;

The Supper of the LORD;

Private Prayer;

Searching the Scriptures; and

Faſting or Abſtinence.

7. Theſe are the General Rules of our Societies; all which we are taught of GOD to obſerve, even in his written Word, the only Rule, and the ſufficient Rule both of our Faith and Practice: And all theſe we know his Spirit writes on every truly awaken'd Heart. If there be any among us who obſerve them not, who habitually break any one of them, let

let it be made known unto them who watch over that Soul, as they that must give an Account. We will admonish him of the Error of his Ways: We will bear with him for a Season. But then if he repent not, he hath no more Place among us. We have deliver'd our own Souls.

JOHN WESLEY.
CHARLES WESLEY.

May 1, 1743.

A PRAYER,

For those who are convinced of Sin.

1 O Most compassionate High Priest,
Full of all Grace we know thou art:
FAITH puts its Hand upon thy Breast,
And feels beneath thy panting Heart.

2 Thy panting Heart for Sinners bleeds;
Thy Mercies and Compassions move;
Thy groaning Spirit interceeds,
And yearn the Bowels of thy Love.

3 Hear then the Pleading Spirit's Prayer,
(The Spirit's Will to Thee is known)
For all who now thy Sufferings share,
And still for full Redemption groan.

4 Poor tempted Souls, with Tempests toss'd,
And Strangers to a Moment's Peace;
Disconsolate, afflicted, lost,
Lost in an howling Wilderness.

5 Torn with an endless War within,
Vex'd with the Flesh and Spirit's Strife,
And struggling in the Toils of Sin,
And agonizing into Life.

6 O let the Pris'ners mournful Cries
As Incense in thy Sight appear;
Their humble Wailings pierce the Skies,
If haply they may feel thee near!

7 The

7 The Captive Exiles make their Moans,
From Sin impatient to be free;
Call home, call home thy baniſh'd ones!
Lead Captive their Captivity!

8 Shew them the Blood that bought their Peace,
The Anchor of their ſtedfaſt Hope;
And bid their guilty Terrors ceaſe,
And bring the ranſom'd Pris'ners up.

9 Out of the Deep regard their Cries,
The Fallen raiſe, the Mourners chear:
O Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſe,
And ſcatter all their Doubt and Fear!

10 Pity the Day of feeble Things;
O gather ev'ry halting Soul,
And drop Salvation from thy Wings,
And make the contrite Sinner whole.

11 Stand by them in the fiery Hour,
Their Feebleneſs of Mind defend;
And in their Weakneſs ſhew thy Power,
And make them patient to the End.

12 O ſatisfy their Soul in Drought;
Give them thy ſaving Health to ſee,
And let thy Mercy find them out;
And let thy Mercy reach to me.

13 Haſt Thou the Work of Grace begun,
And brought them to the Birth in vain?
O let thy Children ſee the Sun!
Let all their Souls be born again!

14 Relieve the Souls whoſe Croſs we bear,
For whom thy ſuff'ring Members mourn;
Anſwer our FAITH's effectual Prayer:
Bid ev'ry ſtruggling Child be born.

15 Hark how thy Turtle Dove complains,
And ſee us weep for *Sion*'s Woe!
Pity thy ſuff'ring People's Pain;
Avenge us of our Inbred Foe.

16 Whom Thou has bound, O LORD, expell,
And take his Armour all away;
The Man of Sin, the Child of Hell,
The Devil in our Nature ſlay.

17 Him and his Works at once deſtroy,
The *Being* of all Sin eraſe,
And turn our Mourning into Joy,
And cloath us with the Robes of Praiſe.

18 Then, when our Suff'rings all are paſt,
O let us pure and perfect be,
And gain our Calling's Prize at laſt,
For ever ſanctified in Thee.